



FAO EXPERT CONSULTATION **COMMUNICATION** FOR **DEVELOPMENT**

MEETING TODAY'S
AGRICULTURE AND
RURAL DEVELOPMENT
CHALLENGES

Office of Knowledge Exchange, Research and Extension (OEK)
Research and Extension Branch (OEKR)



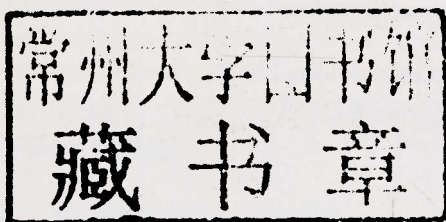
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The final report, background documents, presentations and recommendations from the Expert Consultation are found on FAO's ComDev webpage:

<http://www.fao.org/oek/communication-for-development/en>

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------------|--|
| ACIAR | Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research |
| AMARC | World Association of Community Radio |
| AUB | American University of Beirut |
| BBC | British Broadcasting Company |
| CARIMAC | Caribbean Centre for Media and Communication |
| CC | Climate Change |
| COMDEV | Communication for Development |
| CSDI | Communication for Sustainable Development Initiative |
| CTA | Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation |
| FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations |
| GFRAS | Global Forum for Rural Advisory Services |
| GIZ | Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| IDRC | International Development Research Centre |
| IFAD | International Fund for Agricultural Development |
| IICD | International Institute for Communication and Development |
| IPDC | International Programme for the Development of Communication |
| KIT | Royal Tropical Institute |
| KM | Knowledge Management |
| M&E | Monitoring and Evaluation |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nations Children's Fund |
| WB-ARD | Agriculture and Rural Development Department of the World Bank |
| WCCD | World Congress on Communication for Development |

FOREWORD

Nowadays, compelling issues affecting the agricultural and rural sector not only require stronger commitment from the international community, but also inclusive and demand-driven approaches to development. Fostering a dialogue between institutions and small-scale farmers is critical for the identification of adequate solutions to deal with food insecurity, malnutrition and the impact of climate change. This process of change implies improved access to agricultural knowledge and information, as well as the active participation of the rural population in the development efforts.

Communication is key to supporting inclusive and people-centred initiatives for agricultural innovation and sustainable livelihoods. Communication for Development (ComDev) plays a crucial role in ensuring more equitable access to information, facilitating a dialogue among people and institutions and fostering new and more inclusive development opportunities for rural communities.

The importance of ComDev is recognized within the UN system. FAO has been a pioneer of ComDev since the 1970s, promoting communication strategies as a component of agricultural and rural development policies and programmes. Over the years, hundreds of field projects have been implemented and ComDev systems have been institutionalized in different countries.

Today, more than ever, ComDev is strategically relevant to the work of FAO and other development agencies. FAO is presently engaged in designing and implementing ComDev activities tailored to the needs of the rural population in the context of national agricultural policies, focusing on enhancing the capacities of local institutions to deliver sound ComDev services.

FAO's Office of Knowledge Exchange, Research and Extension (OEK) considers ComDev as a driver of change that needs to be adequately positioned in the work of the Organization and in the agricultural sector. To this end, there is a need to foster collaboration among those institutions and practitioners committed to the recommendation of The Rome Consensus "to move towards a rights-based approach to Communication for Development" (World Congress on Communication for Development - WCCD, Rome, 2006).

Within this framework, the Expert Consultation “Communication for Development: Meeting Today’s Agriculture and Rural Development Challenges” was the first specialized meeting in many years that focused on the role of ComDev in agriculture and rural development. The consultation offered an invaluable opportunity to identify strategic actions to maximize ComDev contributions to the agricultural sector. In particular, the consultation urged FAO to play a leading role in supporting rural institutions and stakeholders in ComDev and to take the necessary steps towards developing a corporate strategy in this field.

The results of the consultation presented in this report call for renewed efforts to position ComDev in the agriculture agenda, establishing partnerships and technical networks and improving impacts in the field. The experts agreed on concrete recommendations on how to mobilize people and institutions to mainstream ComDev. We believe that this way forward will provide better opportunities for rural people to be listened to, so that they will be able to influence decisions in relation to their own development.

Xiangjun Yao

Director

Office of Knowledge Exchange, Research and Extension, FAO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UN General Assembly has called on UN agencies to mainstream ComDev in the development agenda, recognizing

“the pivotal role of communication in the successful implementation of development programmes within the United Nations system and in the improvement of the interaction among actors in development, namely, the agencies, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, Governments and non-governmental organizations.” A/RES/50/130 (1995)

In response to this need, FAO's Office of Knowledge Exchange, Research and Extension (OEK) organized an Expert Consultation on Communication for Development: Meeting Today's Agriculture and Rural Development Challenges, that was held at FAO headquarters from 14 to 16 September, 2011. The main purpose was to identify challenges and strategic actions to maximize ComDev contribution to the agriculture and rural development sector, while positioning it in the work of the Organization.

The Expert Consultation was organized by the FAO ComDev team in collaboration with the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD). The event brought together 32 international ComDev experts and representatives from development agencies, donors, NGOs, communication networks, rural institutions and the academic community.

Participants identified key challenges and strategic areas for ComDev support to agriculture and rural development (e.g. food security, innovation systems, climate change adaptation) such as capacity development for rural institutions and projects, interface with other approaches such as knowledge management, convergence between mass and community media, need for regulatory frameworks, and access to funding. Special attention was given to the need for documenting ComDev impact in the field and for mainstreaming ComDev into agricultural policies and programs.

The experts concurred that **FAO should take a leading role in mainstreaming ComDev in the rural development agenda**. Four main recommendations were prioritized as a way for follow-up by FAO and partner institutions:

1. **International rural development organizations and national institutions should include communication for development in their vision, policy, and strategic framework**
2. **Make ComDev relevant and compelling to key audiences (FAO, academia, other institutions)**
3. **Establish a multi-institutional alliance to promote ComDev principles and practices within agricultural innovation systems and translate these into actions at the country level**
4. **Facilitate national ComDev networks that involve practitioners, academicians and stakeholders, connecting theory, research and practice, and systematically improve standards of programs**

In consideration of its commitment to improving the livelihoods of small farmers, the Expert Consultation urged FAO to take an active role in promoting ComDev as a key element in agricultural and rural development policies and programs. In particular, the participants encouraged FAO to adopt a **corporate ComDev strategy** to ensure stakeholders' engagement and increased effectiveness of FAO work in member countries.





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INTRODUCTION

Nowadays communication is increasingly recognized as a driver of change and a key factor of development. Communication for Development (ComDev) is a people-centred communication approach integrating participatory processes and social media, ranging from rural radio to ICTs, and is different from information dissemination or institutional visibility.

Present challenges in the agricultural and rural development sector, such as climate change and food crises, call for a more systematic use of ComDev methods and tools to ensure equitable access to knowledge and information and the active participation of rural people in development. This entails a reconsideration of the role that ComDev can play, both in the context of agriculture and rural development policies and programmes, as well as at the community level.

ComDev is directly related to sustainable development, because it contributes to the participation and social appropriation of the development process. Rural programmes and projects that are implemented with ComDev components guarantee participation and thus prompt ownership of development objectives. If communities take leadership and ownership of programmes and projects intended to improve their lives, those programmes are likely to be more sustainable once external technical assistance has withdrawn.

Acknowledging the importance of ComDev, in July 2008, during the 63rd period of sessions of the General Assembly, the Secretary General of the United Nations transmitted the report “Communication for Development Programmes within the United Nations System”, presented by the Director General of UNESCO in conformity with Resolution 50/130 of the General Assembly.

This resolution makes clear recommendations to UN agencies and organizations on the institutionalization of ComDev:

“Encourages the relevant agencies, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, including the regional commissions, as appropriate, to use informal mechanisms such as round-table conferences to improve communication for development programmes in the United Nations system”;



“Emphasizes the need for the relevant agencies, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system to develop a systematic approach to capacity-building in the development of communication capacities, particularly with respect to the training of field workers and development workers and technicians as well as communication planners and specialists, especially in the developing countries”;

“Invites the relevant agencies, organizations, funds and programmes of the United Nations system, as well as Governments and the regional commissions, to consider identifying focal points for the purpose of facilitating dialogue in the exchange of information on communication issues related to development so as to strengthen coordination and international cooperation in this area”.

The potential of ComDev has yet to be fully exploited in the rural sector. In many cases ComDev components are not adequately integrated in the design and implementation of agricultural development initiatives, and there is an increasing need for enhancing human and institutional capacities in this field.

Opportunities exist for upgrading and up-scaling activities and services from very specific and localized experiences to more sustained communication processes. Within this context there is an urgent need to identify appropriate measures for the integration of ComDev in national agricultural and rural development policies, the institutionalization of ComDev services and the enhancement of the capacity of rural institutions and stakeholders.

Key international events such as the first World Congress on Communication for Development ([WCCD] held in Rome in October 2006) and the UN Interagency Roundtables on ComDev have stressed the importance of mainstreaming ComDev in the development agenda. FAO has been leading ComDev efforts to fight hunger and achieve food security and is now striving to identify new opportunities for promoting ComDev as part of the agricultural and rural development agenda.

To this end, FAO organized an international Expert Consultation on ComDev. The purpose of the consultation was to provide a forum for development agencies and institutions, donors, NGOs and the academic community to take stock of ComDev initiatives that are currently in place to address ongoing challenges in the agriculture and rural development sector, to identify emerging trends and to foster cooperation between relevant stakeholders. The consultation aimed to promote partnerships and explore mechanisms for collaboration and joint action among institutions committed to rural development and social change.

Objective and Expected Results

The overall purpose of the Expert Consultation was to assess the role of ComDev in relation to emerging challenges and to identify priorities and strategic initiatives, to position ComDev in the development agenda and to maximize its contribution to agriculture and sustainable rural development.

The expected outcomes of this Expert Consultation included:

- » Key issues, challenges and trends identified in relation to the application of ComDev in the agricultural and rural development sector.
- » Learning practices and innovative applications of ComDev to agriculture and rural development shared.
- » Experiences and perspectives on the institutionalization of ComDev services into agricultural and rural development policies gathered.
- » Priorities and strategic interventions to enhance effectiveness of ComDev in agriculture and rural development identified at the institutional and field level.
- » Prospects and key initiatives to position ComDev in the agricultural sector and strengthen collaboration identified.
- » Potential partner international organizations, able to implement and support priority ComDev programmes and follow up actions, identified.



FAO EXPERT CONSULTATION: **AN OVERVIEW**

The Expert Consultation on **Communication for Development: Meeting Today's Agriculture and Rural Development Challenges** was held from 14 to 16 September 2011 at FAO headquarters in Rome. It was organized by the ComDev team within FAO Office of Knowledge Exchange, Research and Extension (OEK), namely by the Communication for Development Officers Mario Acunzo, Riccardo Del Castello and May Hani.

The meeting brought together overall 32 international experts, representing different fields of activity related to rural communication, including major players among development organizations, donor countries, universities with specialized ComDev departments, national rural institutions, global communication networks. In addition, a number of FAO specialists participated as observers and contributed to specific sessions (see Annex A for the full list of participants).

Process Leading Up to the Event

The FAO ComDev team worked in close collaboration with a senior advisor in Communication for Development, Alfonso Gumucio, on all the preparatory activities to the consultation, including the development of background documents, the design of the consultation format and methodology, the identification of participants and the coordination of their inputs to the event.

Steering Committee

A Steering Committee composed of FAO, the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), and the International Institute for Communication and Development (IICD) was established to provide overall guidance and technical orientation to the event.

Members of the Steering Committee coordinated efforts to engage relevant actors and act as a sounding board for the technical contents and proposals emerging from the consultation. The Steering Committee is also responsible for providing appropriate follow-up to the experts' recommendations and promoting effective coordination mechanisms among relevant institutions to support joint action in ComDev for agriculture and rural development.

Background Documents

In preparation for the consultation, the organizing committee shared with the participants a concept note introducing the rationale and objectives of the meeting. A background paper was developed by Alfonso Gumucio to conceptualize key issues and identify trends, challenges and opportunities for ComDev in today's agricultural and rural sector. Along with this, a set of guiding and thought provoking questions were prepared to set the tone and focus of the consultation.

Furthermore, an assessment of ComDev functions, activities, institutional perspectives and perceptions of different stakeholders within FAO was carried out by Silvia Balit, Marzia Pafumi and Vanessa Vertiz and resulted in an overview paper that provided interesting inputs to the debate on mainstreaming ComDev in the agenda of rural development organizations.

Format of the Consultation

Structure and Themes

The consultation was meant to draw on participants' knowledge and skills in the field of communication and rural development. To this end, the sessions were designed as interactive discussions and group works based on the active contribution of all experts involved. The complete agenda of the Expert Consultation is enclosed as Annex B. The first two days were structured into four half-day thematic sessions, addressing the key topics listed below:

Session 1. Communication for rural development today

- » ComDev approaches for agriculture and rural development
- » Current trends in ComDev for agriculture and rural development
- » Evidence of ComDev contribution in this sector
- » Interface with other disciplines

Session 2. Key areas of intervention for ComDev in the agricultural sector

- » Overview of agricultural sector issues
- » Strategic areas of intervention for ComDev (e.g. climate change, food security, agricultural innovation systems, other)

Session 3. Challenges and opportunities for ComDev in the agricultural sector

- » Capacity Development
- » Overlaps with other approaches (e.g. ICTs, KM) applied in the sector
- » Relation with local, community and mass media
- » Policies and regulatory frameworks
- » M&E and funding

Session 4. Enhancing ComDev impact on agricultural development

- » Institutional frameworks for ComDev
- » ComDev in national agricultural policies and programs
- » Establishing rural communication services
- » Up-scaling ComDev activities

The opening session was meant to set the stage of the consultation, to level off participants' views and expectations and reach a common understanding of key ComDev issues and current trends. The following sessions examined the current situation of ComDev for agriculture and rural development in terms of challenges and opportunities, moving from an overview of the sector to the identification of strategic areas of intervention, and highlighted institutional factors and requirements for positioning ComDev in agricultural